

A NEW CRIME-MYSTERY
STORY BY THE
AUTHOR OF "Raffles"

THE THOUSANDTH WOMAN By E. W. Hornung

A Complete Novel Each Week
in THE EVENING WORLD

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.
Cazale, an Englishman, who has emigrated to Australia, is returning to England. His only son, who is a student at the University of London, is in the city. Cazale, who is a very rich man, is in the city. Cazale, who is a very rich man, is in the city. Cazale, who is a very rich man, is in the city.

CHAPTER VIII.

Finger-Prints.

"DON'T follow you, Toye," said Cazale. "I'm thinking of finger-prints. If he'd just laid those things right down, he'd have left the print of his hand as large as life for Scotland Yard."

"The devil he would!" exclaimed Cazale. "I wish you'd explain," he added; "remember I'm a wild man from the woods, and only know of these things by the vaguest kind of hearsay and stray paragraphs in the papers. I never knew you could leave your mark so easily as that."

Toye took the breakfast menu and placed it face downward on the tablecloth. "Lay your hand on that, palm down," he said, "and don't move it for a minute."

Cazale looked at him a moment before complying; then his fine, shapely, sunburnt hand lay still as plaster under their eyes until Toye told him he might take it up.

Of course there was no mark whatever, and Cazale laughed.

"You should have caught me when I came up from those foundations, not from my tub!" said he.

"You wait," replied Hilton Toye, taking the menu gingerly by the edge and putting it out of harm's way in the empty toast-rack. "You can't see anything now, but if you come round to the Savoy I'll show you something."

"What?"

"Your prints, Mr. I don't say I'm Scotland Yard at the game, but I can do it well enough to show you how it's done. You haven't left your mark upon the paper, but I guess you've left the sweat of your hand; if I know a little French chalk over it, the chalk'll stick where your hand did, and blow off easily everywhere else."

"The rest's as simple as all big things. It's hanged a few folks already, but I judge it doesn't have much chance with things that have lain buried in brick-dust. Say, come round to lunch and I'll have your prints ready for you. I'd like awfully to show you how it's done. It would really be a great pleasure."

Cazale excused himself with decision. He had a full morning in front of him.

He was going to see Miss Macnair's brother, son of the late head of the father's old firm of solicitors, and now one of the partners, to get them either to take up Scruton's case themselves, or else to recommend a firm perhaps more accustomed to criminal practice.

Cazale was always apt to be elaborate in the first person singular, either in the past or in the future tense; but he was more so than usual in explaining his considered intentions in this matter that lay so very near his heart.

"Going to see Scruton, too?" said Toye.

"Not necessarily," was the short reply.

But it also was elaborated by Cazale on a moment's consideration. The fact was that he wanted first to know if it were not possible, by the intervention of a really influential lawyer, to obtain the prisoner's immediate release, at any rate on bail.

If impossible, he might hesitate to force himself on Scruton in the prison, but he would see.

"It's a perfect scandal that he should be there at all," said Cazale, as he rose first and ushered Toye out into the lounge. "Only think: our old gardener saw him run out of the drive at half past seven, when the gong went, when the real murderer must have been shivering in the Michelangelo cupboard, wondering how the devil he was ever going to get out again."

"Then you think old man Craven—begging his poor pardon—was getting out some cigars when the man, whoever he was, came in and knocked him on the head?"

Cazale nodded vigorously. "That's the likeliest thing of all!" he cried. "Then the gong went—there may have come a knock at the door

—and there was that cupboard standing open at his elbow."

"With a hole in the floor that might have been made for him?"

"As it happens, yes; he'd search every inch like a rat in a trap, you see; and there it was as I'd left it twenty years before."

"Well, it's a wonderful yarn!" exclaimed Hilton Toye, and he lit the cigar that Cazale had given him. "I think it may be thought one if the police ever own how they made their find," agreed Cazale, laughing and looking at his watch.

Toye had never heard him laugh so often.

"By the way, Drinkwater doesn't want any of all this to come out until he's dragged his man before the bench again."

"Which you mean to prevent?"

"If only I can! I more or less promised not to talk, however, and I'm sure you won't. You know so much already, you may just as well know the rest this week as well as next, if you don't mind keeping it to yourself."

Nobody could have minded this particular embargo less than Hilton Toye; and in nothing was he less like Cazale, who even now had the half-regretful and self-excusing air of the impulsive person who has talked too freely and discovered it too late.

But he had been perfectly delighted to Hilton Toye, almost too appreciative, if anything, and now very anxious to give him a lift in his taxi. Toye, however, had shopping to do in the very street that they were in, and he saw Cazale off with a smile that was as yet merely puzzled and not unfriendly until he had time to recall Miss Blanche's part in the strange affair of the previous afternoon.

Say, weren't they rather intimate, those two, even if he had known each other all their lives? He had it from Blanche (with her second refusal) that she was not, and never had been, engaged.

And a fellow who only wrote to her once in a year—still, they must have been darned intimate, and this funny affair would bring them together again quicker than anything.

Say, what a funny affair it was when you came to think of it! Funny all through, it now struck Toye; beginning on board ship with that dream of Cazale's about the murdered man, leading to all that talk of the old grievance against him, and culminating in his actually finding the implements of the crime in his inspired efforts to save the man of whose innocence he was so positive.

Say, if that Cazale had not been on his way home from Australia at the time!

Like many deliberate speakers, Toye thought like lightning, and had reached this point before he was a hundred yards from the hotel; then he thought of something else, and retraced his steps.

He retraced them even to the table at which he had sat with Cazale, not very many minutes ago; the waiter was only now beginning to clear away.

"Say, waiter, what have you done with the menu that was in that toast-rack? There was something on it that we rather wanted to keep."

"I thought there was, sir," said the English waiter at that admirable hotel.

Toye, however, prepared to talk to him like an American uncle of Dutch extraction.

"You thought that, and you took it away?"

"Not at all, sir. I 'appened to observe the other gentleman put the menu in his pocket, behind your back as you were getting up, because I passed a remark about it to the head waiter at the time!"

CHAPTER IX.

Fair Warning.

IT was much more than a map of the metropolis that Toye carried in his able head. He knew the right places for the right things, from his tailor's at one end of Jermyn street to his hatter's at the other, and from the man for collars and dress shirts, in another of St. James's, to the only man for soft shirts, on Piccadilly.

Hilton Toye visited them all in turn this fine September morning, and found the select team agreeably disengaged, reader than ever to suit him.

Then he gazed critically at his boots. He was not so dead sure that he had struck the only man for boots.

There had been a young fellow aboard the Kaiser Fritz, quite a little bit of a military blood, who had come ashore in a pair of cloth tops that had rather unsettled Mr. Toye's mind just at that one point.

He thought of this young fellow when he was through with the soft-shirt man on Piccadilly. They had dined for a drink or two in the smoking-room, and Capt. Aymer had said he would like to ask you one thing about Mr. Cazale," he said, "and I guess I've a reason for asking, though there's no time to state



He had said so as though he would like it a great deal, and suddenly Toye had a mind to take him at his word right now.

The idea began with those boots with cloth tops, but that was not all there was to it; there was something else that had been at the back of Toye's mind all morning, and now took charge in front.

Aymer had talked some about a job in the war office that enabled him to lunch daily at the Rag; but what his job had been aboard a German steamer Toye did not know and was not the man to inquire.

It was no business of his, anyway. Reference to a card, traded for his own in Southampton Water, and duly filed in his cigarette case, reminded him of the Rag's proper style and title.

And there he was eventually entertained to a sound, workmanlike, rather expeditious meal.

"Say, did you see the cemetery at Genoa?" suddenly inquired the visitor on their way back through the hall. A martial bust had been admired extravagantly before the question.

"Never want to see it again, or Genoa either," said Captain Aymer. "The smoking-room's this way."

"I judge you didn't care a lot about the city," pursued Toye as they found a corner.

"Genoa? Oh, I liked it all right, but you get fed up in a couple of days neither ashore nor aboard. It's a bit amphibious. Of course you can go to a hotel if you like, but not if you're only a poor British soldier."

"Did you say you were there two days?" Toye was cutting his cigar as though it were a corn.

"Two whole days, and we'd had a night in the Bay of Naples just before."

"Is that so? I only came aboard at Genoa, I guess I was wise," added Toye, as though he was thinking of something else. There was no sort of feeling in his voice, but he was sucking his left thumb.

"I say, you've cut yourself!"

"I guess it's nothing. Knife too sharp; please don't worry, Capt. Aymer. I was going to say I only got on at Genoa, and they couldn't give me a room to myself. I had to go in with Cazale; that's how I saw so much of him."

It was Toye's third separate and independent attempt to introduce the name and fame of Cazale as a natural topic of conversation.

Twice his host had listened with adamant politeness this time; he was enjoying quite the second best of liquor brandy to be had at the Rag; and he leaned back in his chair.

"You were rather impressed with him, weren't you?" said Capt. Aymer. "Well, frankly, I wasn't. But rather warp one's judgment to be shot out to Eden on a petty job at this time of year."

So that was where he had been? Yes, and by Jove he had to see a man about it all at 3 o'clock.

"One of the nuts," explained Capt. Aymer, keeping his chair with due restraint.

Toye rose with finer alacrity. "I hope you won't think me rude," said the captain, "but I'm afraid I really mustn't keep him waiting."

Toye said the proper things all the way to the hat stand, and there took frontal measures as a last resort.

"I was only going to ask you one thing about Mr. Cazale," he said, "and I guess I've a reason for asking, though there's no time to state

it now. What did you think of him, Capt. Aymer, on the whole?"

"Ah, there you have me. 'On the whole' is just the difficulty," said Aymer, answering the straight question readily enough. "I thought he was a very good chap as far as Naples, but after Genoa he was another being. I've sometimes wondered what happened in his three or four days ashore."

"Three or four, did you say?"

And at the last moment Toye would have played Wedding Guest to Aymer's Ancient Mariner.

"Yes; you see, he knew these German boats waste a couple of days at Genoa, so he landed at Naples and did his Italy overland. Rather a good idea, I thought, especially as he said he had friends in Rome; but we never heard of 'em before, and I should have let the whole thing strike me a bit sooner if I'd been Cazale. Soon enough to take a handbag and a tooth brush, eh? And I don't think I should have run it quite so fine at Genoa, either. But there are run birds in this world, and always will be!"

Toye felt one himself as he picked his way through St. James's Square. If it had not been just after lunch, he would have gone straight and had a cocktail, for of course he knew the only place for them.

What he did was to blue round out of the square and to obtain for the asking, at another old haunt, on Cockspur street, the latest little timetable of continental trains. This he carried, not on foot but in a taxi, to the Savoy Hotel, where it kept him busy in his own room for the best part of another hour.

But by that time Hilton Toye looked more than an hour older than on sitting down at his writing table with pencil, paper and the little book of trains; he looked horrified, he looked distressed, and yet he looked crafty, determined and immensely alive.

He proceeded, however, to take some of the life out of himself, and to add still more to his apparent age, by repairing for more inward light and leading to a Turkish bath.

Now the only Turkish bath, according to Hilton Toye's somewhat exclusive code, was not even a hundred yards from Cazale's hotel; and there the visitor of the morning again presented himself before the afternoon; now merely a little worn, as a man will look after losing a stone an hour on a warm afternoon, and a bit blue again about the chin, which of course looked a little deeper and stronger on that account.

Cazale was not in; his friend would wait, and in fact waited over an hour in the little lounge. An evening paper was offered him; he took it listlessly, scarcely looked at it at first, then tore it in his anxiety to find something he had quite for-

gotten—from the newspaper end. But he was waiting as stoically as before when Cazale arrived in tremendous spirits.

"Stop and dine!" he cried out at once.

"Sorry I can't; got to go and see somebody," said Hilton Toye.

"Then you must have a drink."

"No, I thank you," said Toye, with the decisive courtesy of a total abstainer.

"You look as if you wanted one; you don't look a bit fit," said Cazale most kindly.

"Nor am I, sir!" exclaimed Toye. "I guess London's no place for me in the fall. Just as well, too, I judge, since I've got to light out again straight away."

"You haven't?"

"Yes, sir, this very night. That's the worst of a business that takes you to all the capitals of Europe in turn. It takes you so long to fit around that you never know when you've got to start in again."

"Which capital is it this time?" said Cazale. His exuberant geniality had been dashed very visibly for the moment.

But already his high spirits were reasserting themselves; indeed, a cynic with an ear might have caught the note of sudden consolation in the question that Cazale asked so briskly.

"Got to go down to Rome," said Toye, watching the effect of his words.

"But you're just come back from there!" Cazale looked no worse than puzzled.

"No, sir, I missed Rome out; that was my mistake, and here's this situation being developing behind my back."

"What situation?"

"Oh, why it wouldn't interest you! But I've got to go down to Rome, whether I like it or not, and I don't like it any, because I don't have any friends there. And that's what I'm doing right here. I was wondering if you'd do something for me, Cazale!"

"If I can," said Cazale, "with pleasure." But his smiles were gone. "I was wondering if you'd give me an introduction to those friends of yours in Rome!"

There was just a little pause, and Cazale's tongue just showed between his lips, moistening them.

It was at that moment the only touch of color in his face.

"Did I tell you I'd any friends there?"

The sound of his voice was perhaps less hoarse than puzzled.

Toye made himself chuckle as he sat looking up out of somber eyes.

"Well, if you didn't," said he. "I guess I must have dreamed it!"

CHAPTER X.

The Week of Their Lives.

TOYE'S face went back to Italy," said Cazale. "He says he may be away only a week. Let's make it the week of our lives!"

The scene was the little room it pleased Blanche to call her parlor, and the time a preposterously early hour of the following forenoon.

Cazale might have planned down from the skies into her sunny snugery, though his brand new Burberry rather suggested another extravagant taxicab.

But Blanche saw only his worn excited face, and her own was not at its best in her sheer amazement.

If she had heard the last two sentences, to understand them at the time she would have felt bound to take them up first, and to ask how on earth Mr. Toye could affect her in such a manner.

But such was the effect of the preceding statement that all the rest was several moments on the way to her comprehension, where it arrived, indeed, more incomprehensible than ever, but not worth making a fuss about then.

"Italy!" she had ejaculated meanwhile. "When did he go?"

"Nine o'clock last night."

"But—she checked herself—"I simply can't understand it, that's all!"

"Why? Have you seen him since the other afternoon?"

His manner might have explained those other two remarks, now both after all, did it necessarily apply to Mr. Toye.

That was something. It made it easier for Blanche not to ask questions.

Cazale had gone out on the balcony; now he called to her; and there was no taxi, but a smart open car, waiting in the road, its brasses blaring in the sun, an immaculate chauffeur at the wheel.

"Where is that, Sweep?"

"Mine, for the week I'm talking about! I mean sure, if you only buck up and get ready to come out! A week doesn't last forever, you know!"

Blanche ran off to Martha, who fussed and hindered her with the best intentions. It would have been difficult to say which was the more excited of the two.

But the old nurse would waste time in perfectly fatuous reminiscences of the very earliest expeditions in which Mr. Cazale had led and Blanche had followed, and what a bonny pair they had made even then, etc.

Severely snubbed on that subject, she took to peering at her mistress, once her hair, with furtive eagerness and impatience; for Blanche, on her side, looked as though she had something on her mind, and, indeed, had made one or two attempts to get it off. She had to force it even in the end.

"There's just one thing I want to say before I go, Martha."

"Yes, dearie, yes?"

"You know when Mr. Toye called yesterday, and I was out?"

"Oh, Mr. Toye; yes, I remember, Miss Blanche."

"Well, I don't want you to say that he came in and waited half an hour in vain; in fact, not that he came in at all, or that you're even sure you saw him, unless, of course, you're asked."

Martha looked for a moment as though she were about to weep, and then for another moment as though she would die of laughing.

But a third moment she celebrated by making an utter old foot of herself, as she would have been told to her face by anybody but Blanche, whose yellow hair was being disarranged by the very hands that had helped to imprison it under that motor hat and veil.

"Oh, Blanche, is that all you have to tell me?" said Martha.

And then the week of their lives began.

"Well, I don't know, but there seems to be a little bad blood between Mr. Toye and Mr. Cazale."

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